The INNER Rāmāyaṇa

unveiled by

Swami Swaroopananda

The INNER Rāmāyaṇa

unveiled by
Swami Swaroopananda

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust

© Copyright Reserved Central Chinmaya Mission Trust
All rights reserved. No part (either whole or part) may be reproduced, copied, scanned, stored in a retrieval system, recorded or transmitted in any form or by any means, including but not limited to electronic and mechanical means, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

•

Published by:
Chinmaya Prakashan
The Publications Division of
Central Chinmaya Mission Trust
Sandeepany Sadhanalaya
Saki Vihar Road, Powai, Mumbai 400072, India
Tel.: +91-22-2803 4900
Email: ccmtpublications@chinmayamission.com
Website: www.chinmayamission.com

•

Distribution Centre in USA:
Chinmaya Mission West
Publications Division
560 Bridgetown Pike
Langhorne, PA 19053, USA
Tel.: 1-888-CMW-READ, (215) 396-0390 Fax: (215) 396-9710
Email: publications@chinmayamission.org
Website: www.chinmayapublications.org

•

Designed by:
Chinmaya Kalpanam, Mumbai

•

Digitized by:
Chinmaya Digital Media, Mumbai

Transliteration and Pronunciation Guide

In the book, Devanāgarī characters are transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912. In it one fixed pronunciation value is given to each letter; f, q, w, x and z are not called to use. According to this scheme:

Devanāgarī	Translit-eration	Sounds like	Devanāgarī	Translit-eration	Sounds like
अ	a	son	ढ्	ḍh	adhesive*
आ	ā	father	ण्	ṇ	under*
इ	i	different	त्	t	tabla
ई	ī	feel	थ्	th	thumb
उ	u	full	द्	d	this
ऊ	ū	boot	ध्	dh	Gandhi
ऋ	ṛ	rhythm*	न्	n	nose
ॠ	ṝ	**	प्	p	pen
ऌ	ḷ	**	फ्	ph	phantom*
ए	e	evade	ब्	b	boil
ऐ	ai	delight	भ्	bh	abhor
ओ	o	core	म्	m	mind
औ	au	now	य्	y	yes
क्	k	calm	र्	r	right
ख्	kh	khan	ल्	l	love
ग्	g	gate	व्	v	very
घ्	gh	ghost	श्	Ś	shut
ङ्	ṅ	ankle*	ष्	ṣ	sugar
च्	c	chuckle	स्	s	simple
छ्	ch	witch*	ह्	h	happy
ज्	j	justice	ं	ṁ	improvise
झ्	jh	Jhansi	ः	ḥ	**
ञ्	ñ	banyan	क्ष्	kṣ	action
ट्	ṭ	tank	त्र्	tr	three*
ठ्	ṭh	**	ज्ञ्	jñ	gnosis
ड्	ḍ	dog	ऽ	'	a silent 'a'

* These letters don't have an exact English equivalent. An approximation is given here.
** These sounds cannot be approximated in English words.

Contents

Ayodhya and Daśaratha

Birth of Lord Rāma

Arrival of Sage Viśvāmitra

Sharing the Lord

Destruction of Tāḍakā and Subāhu

Significance of Mārīca

Ahalyā's Liberation

Lord Rāma's Marriage to Sītā

Beware of 'Kaikeyī' and 'Mantharā'

The Golden Deer – The Fall

Rāvaṇa – The Mega Delusion

Pining for the Lord

Śrī Hanumāna – The Guru

The Final Battle – Destruction of the Ego

A Master's 'Mind'

'Rā' and 'Mā'

Preface

The *Rāmāyaṇa* is a fascinating and enthralling epic. As children we grew up listening to its inspiring stories, and it provided a sound foundation for our value system. However, the epic is not just a fable that has been passed down through generations; its deep mystical knowledge is revealed through the grace and blessings of a Guru. This 'inner' Rāmāyaṇa was unveiled to me by Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda when I was a youngster. With his inimitable wit, humour and depth of insight, Gurudev awakened our hearts and minds as he unfolded the core meaning of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and its relevance to our spiritual life.

Seekers of both the devotional and the intellectual bents will find a myriad of jewels in the tapestry of this profoundly moving and philosophical story.

Ayodhya and Daśaratha

The great King Daśaratha lived in the kingdom of Ayodhya. The word 'Ayodhya' is made up of the syllables '*a*-yudh'. Yudh (Yuddha) means 'battle' or 'conflict' and '*a*' is a prefix meaning 'without'. In our everyday life, conflicts seem to be everywhere; there are disputes in the family, there is disharmony in society, wars in the world and, not least, incessant discord within our own minds. We crave peace, yet are relentlessly entangled in yuddha; we desire happiness, yet our life is full of struggles and weariness. Ayodhya, though, was a place where there was no battle, conflict or quarrel. This unique kingdom was ruled by King Daśa-ratha – a man who had his ratha under his mastery. Our body is a ratha, 'chariot', with ten daśa, 'sense organs', which are compared to horses. The eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin are the five organs of perception; and the hands, legs, speech and two organs of excretion, are the five organs of action. Together these ten horses carry the chariot of our body forward. A person who has mastery over this ratha lives in peace and harmony.

The king had three beautiful and virtuous wives – Kausalyā, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī. These noblewomen represent three different virtues within us. Kausalyā, from the word 'kuśalatā', means 'well-being' or 'prosperity'. Hence, Kausalyā is one who is concerned about the welfare of humanity and brings prosperity to all. Sumitrā is a person with an attitude of friendship towards everyone, and Kaikeyī means having both compassion (karuṇā) and passion in equally abundant measure. When this queen showed kindness she was almost a saint, but later, overcome with selfish obsession, she became a treacherous mother who turned her back on a dearly loved son.

When a king has mastery over himself, is wedded to the welfare of his people, and possesses an attitude of friendship and compassion, his kingdom naturally enjoys peace and prosperity. Similarly, when our mind becomes a Daśa-ratha – a master of the ten senses – and

the intellect develops goodwill and kindness with the goal of helping others, our heart becomes free of all conflicts – Ayodhya. In such an exalted, exemplary personality, Truth dawns; the birth of the Lord takes place.

Birth of Lord Rāma

King Daśaratha had wealth, power and peerless wives, but he had no children. He wanted a son to succeed him and rule the kingdom, and therefore, performed a special yajña or 'sacrificial ceremony' to invoke divine intervention. Upon completion of the yajña, a devatā (God-manifestation) appeared, carrying a bowl of rice pudding, and gave it to the king. King Daśaratha offered the sweet rice pudding to his wives. With the blessings of the saints and sages, good and righteous children are born to those parents who live in a spirit of yajña and sharing, where the mind is sāttvika (pure) as milk, the intellect is keen, and the heart is noble.

Thus Lord Rāma manifests in such a well-integrated mind and intellect coupling that is dedicated to the service of the world. The word 'Rāma' means 'one who delights everybody'; what ultimately satisfies us is happiness and this happiness is Rāma. It is the Infinite Reality that is revelling in everyone's heart because of which even the body, in truth only a bag of flesh and bones, is considered dear; once Rāma departs, the body becomes a carcass that no one wishes to keep. This Rāma is the Ātman (Soul/Self) within all and resides at the core of our being.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa declares –

Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bhārata, and a rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself ![1]

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age.[2]

The Lord does not descend when everyone is evil because the wicked will destroy themselves by their own ruthlessness anyway. There is no need for Him to come when everybody is upright, either. There is an amusing anecdote about a devotee who one day

approached Swami Chinmayananda and said, "Swamiji, God says He comes when there is a preponderance of evil in society, so I have decided I am going to bring God to earth. I am going to become so immoral and terrible that He will simply have to come. I am going to be like Rāvaṇa!" Gurudev smiled and replied to the man, "For mini Rāvaṇas like you, we Swamis are enough!"

The Lord does not have to take an avatāra (incarnation) to eliminate evil; He can easily use anyone as an instrument. He incarnates to establish righteousness, when the good are being tyrannised by the wicked, when the Rāvaṇas and Kumbhakaraṇas of the world oppress the virtuous. Tulasīdāsa beautifully points out –

Lord Rāmacandra took a human form for the well-being of His devotees.[3]

This is in the macrocosm, but the Supreme also manifests in our hearts. How does He do that? How do we experience the infinite, all-pervasive Lord within ourselves? In the *Tulasī Rāmāyaṇa*, Lord Śiva affirms –

The Lord who is all-pervasive manifests out of love.[4]

Thus the key element is devotion. The Ātman – Ātmārāma – is present within us; it is that vitalising essence because of which we see, hear, smell and taste; it is because of which we are alive. Yet, we do not know Him. When the mind, like King Daśaratha, is full of devotion, a certain dispassion develops. The king is wedded to Kausalyā who represents a keen intellect free of all selfishness and negativities. When the mind and intellect are focused on the Lord and we call out to Him by His name – Śrī Rāma – He reveals Himself. Antaḥkaraṇa is the inner equipment, the inner city, the inner space where Rāma is experienced as a mass of inexplicable, unlimited happiness and bliss.

Lord Rāma arrived accompanied by his three brothers – Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna. Bharata is one who nourishes everybody, who is the very portrait of love and sacrifice. Lakṣmaṇa stands for mindful detachment, zeal and a life of dedicated service, and Śatrughna, the reticent brother, represents humility, for, what humility indeed can we claim to have if we make any noise about possessing it? When Rāma comes into our heart, these three – love and sacrifice, service and dispassion, selflessness and humility – will also emerge.

---

[1] यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥ - भगवद्-गीता-४.७

[2] परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे॥ - भगवद्-गीता-४.८

[3] राम भगत हित नर तनु धारी। सहि सङ्कट किये साधु सुखारी॥ - रामचरितमानस-१.२३.१

[4] हरि ब्यापक सर्बत्र समाना। प्रेम तें प्रगट होहिं मैं जाना॥ - रामचरितमानस-१.१८४.३

Arrival of Sage Viśvāmitra

With the arrival of Rāma, Ayodhya was now full of bliss. The Lord played with His brothers – in other words, we see Him dance and play in our heart, making our every moment ecstatic. However, while we may feel immense delight within, if our surroundings are turbulent, if our environment is chaotic, we will not be in complete harmony; some negative effect is likely to occur. King Daśaratha was satisfied with the peace and prosperity of his kingdom, but just outside the city, the ṛṣis (seers) were being constantly harassed and attacked by terrible demons.

The great Sage Viśvāmitra (viśvā – universe, mitra – friend) who lived on the outskirts of Ayodhya and helped other saints with their rituals, worship and meditation, arrived at the palace. King Daśaratha, well aware of the importance of a saint's blessings, welcomed him with reverence, and offered him whatever he desired. Viśvāmitra informed him of the seers' plight and their need for protection from the demons who were disturbing their worship and sacrifices. He requested the king that Śrī Rāma be permitted to accompany him, to destroy the rākṣasas (demons) and assuage the seers. No doubt Sage Viśvāmitra possessed the capacity to vanquish the fiends himself, but there were a number of significant reasons for this appeal.

King Daśaratha was stunned. Being extremely attached to his eldest son, he could not bear to part with him. Most parents would empathise with the king, of course. For example, if your friend's son wished to take up monastic life, you would tell your friend that as a father he was very fortunate and blessed. On the other hand, if your son wished to enter monkhood, you would likely be aghast and do everything possible to change his mind. Similarly, King Daśaratha tried to dissuade the sage, even though Viśvāmitra reminded the king of how he had gained his sons through the blessings of a yajña,

and pointed out that he would receive untold blessings by sharing the Lord with everyone.

At first, the king failed to understand the full import of Viśvāmitra's words. The sage requested Guru Vasiṣṭha, the king's Guru, to intercede. Sage Vasiṣṭha reminded King Daśaratha of his duty to his subjects, of how society could deteriorate due to a decline in worship and yajñas, and underlined the fact that a ṛṣi would never take anything without giving; with the blessings of the seers, the kingdom would gain many additional benefits.

Sharing the Lord

We have a responsibility to remove evil, not only from within ourselves, but also externally, in the world around us. Many great Masters, having attained spiritual enlightenment, choose to remain in the Himalayas, where they revel in Śrī Rāma, in their Ayodhya, and continue to bless mankind with their meditative vibrations of peace. However, other great sages give up their serene, lofty abodes and come down to the plains to teach and benefit society. Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda insisted, "If you have gained that peace and happiness, then go and share it with others. Let this happiness bring about welfare and peace in society." Thus if you nurture devotion in your heart and gain a taste of the bliss that the Guru purveys, just like the devatā who brought the rice pudding; if you gain a vision of this happiness even in your old age; if Śrī Rāma manifests in the seat of your meditation, do not keep Him locked within you; do not leave this world without sharing Him with others. Go, reach out, spread that knowledge and bliss.

Eventually, reminded by the two sages of his duty to uphold the principles of public safety and social orderliness, King Daśaratha was able to bridle his parental affection and agreed to send both Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa along with Viśvāmitra. While they were leaving, a concerned Mother Kausalyā requested the sage to take adequate care of her son and, especially, to feed him with nutritious butter and misrī (crystal sugar). These are beautiful and significant words, for the Lord should always be carried in an atmosphere of sweetness, gentleness and purity. When one ventures out into society to do the Lord's work, the world will often be cruel and unsympathetic, and people will irritate and challenge you. Do not be bitter; do not become callous; let your heart remain soft; let there be sweetness in your speech; let there be kindness in your actions. Even as you fight the most vitriolic forces in society, you carry the Lord in your heart. Therefore, spread that joy and peace; let knowledge and love be your arrows against prejudice and

misunderstanding. Do not hide your devotion. Share it and entice everyone to benefit from it.

Destruction of Tāḍakā and Subāhu

Viśvāmitra took the two brothers to the forest where the mighty demoness, Tāḍakā, lived with her two sons, Mārīca and Subāhu, and hordes of other demonic creatures. They constantly attacked the seers and disrupted their sādhanā (spiritual practices). When Tāḍakā saw the two young and gentle princes, she rushed towards them. Śrī Rāma promptly killed her, and then a few days later, Mārīca was found and thrown hundreds of miles beyond the ocean, by the force of the Lord's arrow. Next, Subāhu was slain with an arrow of fire, while Lakṣmaṇa annihilated all the other demons. Viśvāmitra blessed Rāma and endowed Him with many powers.

With the Guru's blessings, when you perceive Śrī Rāma during moments of deep meditation, no doubt, there is great bliss. But you cannot sit in meditation forever. You cannot neglect your duties; you cannot abandon the world. Unfortunately, the mind again becomes unsettled and disturbed upon facing the challenges of the material realm. The demons – Tāḍakā, Mārīca and Subāhu – confront you, internally and externally. They dwell in your heart along with hordes of other unwholesome impulses. Tulasīdāsa, the celebrated author of the *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa* (one of the two popular versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*), points out that Tāḍakā represents durāśā (false expectations) born of false imaginations, and is constantly devouring us. Her two sons, Mārīca and Subāhu, are dośa and duḥkha – negativity and sorrow. False knowledge, misguided expectations and delusions breed distrust and despair. For instance, the erroneous expectation that wealth gives happiness leads one to live totally in pursuit of material goods. Man is ready to step on others, hurt, cheat, even plunder or kill for wealth, in the deceptive hope that more wealth will provide great pleasure and security. In actual fact, we feel less safe and install more locks when we have more riches! Wealth gives us comforts but not happiness, we may be surrounded by lots of people, but may not have a single genuine friend; wealth can purchase us medals, but not glory. Other examples of Tāḍakā's

presence in our life – We take it for granted that people will love us in spite of everything – this is a delusion; we count on our family and children to look after us in old age – this is another fallacy; we expect people to be kind and nice to us – this is a further misconception. We continue to live in a world of endless delusions! What's more, we buy, hoard and cling to objects because of the mistaken belief that they are permanent. Nothing is permanent. These illusory expectations are durāśā and give birth to dośa and duḥkha – they breed negative tendencies, make us bitter, greedy, lustful, and ultimately lead to sorrow.

Right knowledge removes these false expectations and delusions, and leads to the birth of Śrī Rāma in our heart. We gain a few moments of bliss; congratulate ourselves, and feel more spiritual and devoted. Yet, when we go out and face the world, imagining that the world will worship us, imagining that we will remain calm and composed, we are devoured, not by the world, but by the same misguided expectations, and fall prey to jealousy, anger and hatred. Nonetheless, do not just keep the Lord inside; take Him outside with you and discover whether you can love unconditionally and joyfully, and confront all the challenges of life. Whenever you face problems or unpleasant situations, and feel the aggression of negative tendencies rising within you, chant the name of the Lord; repeat His name with devotion and experience peace. It is then that we become established in our realisation of the Supreme. We must build our bliss and heaven not just at the seat of meditation, but amidst all the strife and struggles, meanness and madness, of the everyday world. A true devotee is never miserable as he or she has no desires or expectations of the world; he or she remains forever with the Lord.

Significance of Mārīca

It is vital to note that Śrī Rāma killed Tāḍakā and Subāhu but not Mārīca. The Lord struck Mārīca with a powerful, headless arrow that propelled the demon eight hundred miles away, beyond the sea. In our spiritual sādhanā, false expectations, delusions and sorrows have to be destroyed, but not necessarily our passions, attachments and stubbornness. Mārīca was sent far away and later came to be of positive use to Śrī Rāma. Similarly, we are enjoined to keep all negative tendencies at bay, to not express them, but instead regulate and transform them into virtues. Just as a perceptive parent channels a child's mischievousness and obstinacy, turning it into motivated energy and determination, we can transform negative tendencies into dynamic virtues by chanting the Lord's name with devotion and keeping Him in our heart. The name of the Lord not only anaesthetises all negativity, delusions and sorrows, but also arrests our passions and attachments, recasting these as stepping stones on the path towards the *Inner Rāmāyaṇa.*

Ahalyā's Liberation

After spending a few days with the sages, Viśvāmitra decided to take Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to Mithilā Nagarī, the land of King Janaka. Along the way, upon crossing the river Ganga, they saw an abandoned hermitage. When Lord Rāma expressed surprise at the desolation of the place, Viśvāmitra narrated to Him the story of the āśrama. This had once been the residence of Gautama Ṛṣi and his devoted wife Ahalyā. One day, during the Ṛṣi's absence, Indra devatā, the King of the gods, disguised as her husband, approached Ahalyā with prurient intentions. The Seer's wife wavered briefly and fell to the impostor's advances. Gautama Ṛṣi came to know of the situation and cursed both her and Indra before leaving the āśrama. As Ahalyā had acted unintelligently, like a jaḍa-buddhi (inert intellect), she was to become a rock. (Indra as the perpetrator of this ruse met a worse fate.) Ahalyā fell at her husband's feet and begged for forgiveness; the Seer relented and assured her that she would be released from the curse when Daśaratha's son set foot in the āśrama.

Indra represents the sensory-driven mind that invariably generates distractions and temptations in the guise of virtues, while Ahalyā represents the intellect that succumbs to the seductive gestures of such a mind. Although on the surface of things it is good to embrace the lofty impulses that arise every now and then in one's heart, one also has to be alert in the process of fulfilling them – like an intelligent wife, who should be sensitive to the touch of her husband. Ahalyā was not attentive enough to recognise instantly that she was being taken advantage of. Actually Gautama Ṛṣi both cursed and blessed his wife. She did not literally become stone, only stone-like. She remained fixed at one place, performing tapas (severe austerities). She had fallen – pata – albeit accidentally, from her exalted position as the Seer's wife and now had to undertake tapa as a means to exhaust the stigma that tarnished her. She had to retreat, refocus, restore and reinforce her clarity of vision, in order

to be uplifted and be reconciled with her past glory. While she had always been sweet and soft, trusting and tenacious of her beliefs, she now needed to cultivate a certain sharpness. Her asceticism would be fulfilled upon the arrival of Śrī Rāma. Indeed, so subtle is the Lord, the supreme Reality, and such is the finesse required to apprehend it, that the slightest distraction or indiscretion can result in failure. Thus seers have likened the spiritual path to a razor's edge. Still, a devotee who has unmitigated sincerity in his or her heart is never far from the Lord. So close, and so dear, to the Lord are such seekers, that Grace Incarnate, the Lord Himself, comes to 'pluck' them out of their entanglement.

The Lord came, looked around the hermitage to find Ahalyā, and as the story goes, He lay His feet on the calcified woman. One can safely claim, however, that Śrī Rāma had too much respect for women to physically touch one with His feet. More likely, as He moved about in search of Ahalyā, the dust of His feet touched the Seer's wife, and she emerged anew.

The Lord takes birth not just to destroy the wicked, but also to uplift His devotees. It is easy to condemn someone who has made a mistake; it is easy to condemn the downtrodden, but how many of us really make an effort to uplift the fallen, the weak, the dejected? By the mere contact of the dust of the Lord's feet, Ahalyā was sanctified and she was reunited with her husband.

The Ahalyā story emphasises the truth that the custodians of dharma, the builders and caretakers of the foundation of society, are in fact its women, not its men. Therefore, in a sense something special is expected of a woman compared with a man. Note – This is meant as a compliment to womanhood, not a statement of convenience for men to use against women. History has shown that entire families and even whole institutions can be brought down by the actions of a single woman, whether as the so-called 'power behind the throne', the 'secret behind every man's success', or the 'hand that rocks the cradle'; indeed, generations can suffer the

consequences, in ways often unseen. On the other hand, every woman who is of clear vision and noble character becomes a solid building block for humanity at large. Hence, a lady – in light of her delicate yet extremely vital position – cannot afford to take things for granted. More so a Seer's wife, for she is regarded as an example to society.

In her hymn of praise to Śrī Rāma, Ahalyā herself stresses that her husband's curse was in fact a blessing, as she had 'feasted (her) eyes' on the Lord. Śrī Rāma's mission was to establish dharma (righteousness), and part of that was to highlight the role of women in society. On the more philosophical level, this episode of the *Rāmāyaṇa* serves as a signpost to devotees – men and women, equally – not to be naive. Spiritual life is not lived merely in the mind, and a 'seeker' or 'spiritual' person cannot be called thus only in name or garb, or by virtue of an association with some religious organisation. Often so-called seekers, even whole communities of believers, confuse social traditions for spiritual thirst, and settle into a pattern of complacency, of mere attendance at temple or church services, of routine observance of rites and rituals, or of acts of charity at best. That is largely because their spirituality is lived more self-satisfactorily than God-seekingly. To use the Ahalyā metaphor with a twist, it is a lifestyle that could be carved in stone. True spiritual life, however, has a much more vibrant pulse. It cuts across, and grows through, our real, everyday life – and the world, as we all know, is not always sweetness and light. It plunges deep into our thought patterns, our motives and our secret enjoyments. It soars high above our intellections and aspirations. It seeks God as much in the factories as in the flower fields; in an earthquake, as in an eclipse; in joy, as in sorrow. Because it is our very Self Supreme, it infuses the most intimate levels of our perceived difference from the Divine. Hence, the ardent seeker of Truth, the true mumukṣu (one with a 'burning desire for Liberation'), must cultivate a balance of deftness and devotion, sharpness and sensitivity.

The intelligent reader will note that this is not to discourage expression of spiritual fervour, or to denigrate congregational acts of worship and social service. Quite the contrary. In fact, spiritual intentions must find their way into the physical realm. The call here, though, is for a much more focused, personal and insightful approach to Self-discovery. Over and above social mores, the serious aspirant must surrender himself, wholeheartedly and wisely, to the pursuit of the ultimate Reality.

Tulasīdāsa asserts in *Nāma Vandanā* (The Glory of the Name) –

Rāma redeemed an ascetic's wife, but His Name has reformed the hearts of millions.[1]

Śrī Rāma in His earthly incarnation uplifted one repentant soul, but His name itself is so powerful that over the ages it has moved millions to heights beyond their natural limitations. This is to remind and motivate us never to give up on ourselves even if we may have committed the most heinous of crimes, but to hold on to the name of the Lord. When His name takes root within us, a new life blossoms in the heart and all negativities start falling away.

---

[1] राम एक तापस तिय तारी। नाम कोटि खल कुमति सुधारी॥ - रामचरितमानस-१.२३.२

Lord Rāma's Marriage to Sītā

Led by Sage Viśvāmitra, the two princes reached Mithilā Nagarī. Sītā, the daughter of King Janaka, was the epitome of perfection, love, beauty and righteousness, and so no ordinary man could be deemed a suitable match for her. To win the hand of the incomparable Sītā, princes and powerful men from near and afar were invited to join a tournament where they had to lift, bend and string Bhavacāpa, the enormous bow of Lord Śiva. 'Cāpa' means 'bow' and 'bhava' refers to Lord Śiva. However, 'bhava' also means 'constant becoming'. In life, we are often so dissatisfied that we become slaves to the very process of becoming… rich, famous, stylish, smart, you name it. Sometimes we have a real need or a good reason for wanting to become something; at other times we have no reason, no higher purpose other than our own fancy or misguided belief, for becoming anything. And even when we have already achieved what we wanted to become, we want more! A middle-class man wants to become rich; a rich man wants to become richer; a minister wants to become chief minister; a chief minister wants to become Prime Minister! We always want to become something other than what we already are, and as we become that, we also inherit all the problems of such 'becoming'. To illustrate, when one becomes a parent, one has little choice but to accept all the responsibilities and challenges of parenthood. Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with the phenomenon of becoming, but day after day, year after year, life stage after life stage… Where does it all end? This is known as bhavasāgara, the 'sea of transmigration', or the realm of worldly roles and responsibilities, in which, despite certain joys and pleasures, we are constantly insecure, moving from pillar to post, all the while enduring endless fear and pressure.

If one wants peace – personified by Mother Sītā – one should have the resolve to snap the 'Bow of Saṁsāra', the cause of all fear. Anxieties, tensions and uncertainties are nothing but different forms

of fear. Thus only a courageous person can be wedded to 'peace'. Marriages usually become miserable because of selfish egos; in order to wed peace, one has to break the ego. As the name of the Lord makes a decisive entry into the arena of our hearts, it picks up our ego by the scruff of the neck, as it were, and conquers all the fears found in bhavasāgara. It becomes the rudder in our life, steering us through whatever roles and responsibilities we need to take on in order to learn the lessons we need to learn, to exhaust the vāsanās (unconscious, inherent proclivities) or karma we need to exhaust, and thereby evolve. Lord Rāma valiantly broke the bow and was ceremoniously united with Sītā.

This is 'Sahajasamādhi'. With the blessings of the Guru, we obtain the name of the Lord; as this name makes inroads into our heart, it subjugates all our negative tendencies and unites us with peace… the peace that passeth all understanding. This is the marriage of Rāma and Sītā.

On a practical, day-to-day level, too, the bow of Lord Śiva in this episode holds a special significance: the weapon stands for an agile, discerning mind as embodied by Śrī Rāma. A man, when he functions in the competitive, workaday world, has to hold on to an identity, a semblance of ego. But as a spiritual aspirant he must also know how to string the ego-bow and act toward his objectives; in other words, he must know how to use his ego as a tool in the service of his own spiritual evolution, even in his workplace. At the end of the workday, or whenever the occasion calls for it, he must also be able to break the ego-bow and return home with humility. Only such a prudent man can ensure lasting peace in the household. After all, a perfect marriage is one where a woman has great dedication and a man genuine humility, isn't it?

On the deeper level, such an astute mind alone is a fit champion for the sacred bow of Lord Śiva, for, it is with the blessings of Śiva Himself that the bow could be lifted and strung, even broken, by Śrī Rāma.

Technically, the journey of meditation should end here, but the true wealth of the *Rāmāyaṇa* only begins to be revealed at this stage. The next portion of the epic teaches us how to do our sādhanā (spiritual practices) and how to rule the world (that is, our world) from the throne of Self-realisation, evoking Rāma-rājya (the golden reign of Rāma).

Beware of ‘Kaikeyī’ and ‘Mantharā’

Subjectively, Rāma is the Ātman, Consciousness or the Self; Sītā, Māyā-śakti, is the mind. When the Ātman is united with a pure mind, there is bliss. Thus when Śrī Rāma returned to Ayodhya with his bride Sītā, there was joy and peace.

Now the story takes a twist… Kaikeyī, the wonderful and compassionate mother, doted on Rāma even more than on her own son, Bharata. One fine day her personal attendant, Mantharā (the name means ‘one who moves and thinks very slowly’), overheard that King Daśaratha intended to crown Śrī Rāma as the next king. Because she had been Bharata’s nanny, and to ingratiate herself with the queen she served, she sought to change the king’s decision in favour of Bharata. And so she slowly but surely poisoned Kaikeyī’s mind.

Initially, Kaikeyī was delighted to hear that Śrī Rāma would be installed as regent. She was not unhappy even when Mantharā tried to corrupt her affections with the contemptible thought that Bharata would consequently be reduced to a mere pawn in Rāma’s court. But then, the crafty Mantharā rubbed a soft spot in Kaikeyī and played on her jealousy by pointing out that Kausalyā, as Queen Mother, would end up keeping King Daśaratha all to herself. Kaikeyī finally buckled.

The same reaction is true of everyone of us: When it comes to a choice between love and self-interest, the latter sometimes becomes more important than the former; in other words, we tend to cave in to the ‘I’ over and above the Lord, or our own convenience and wants rather than the dharma we profess to understand and believe in. Taking advantage of a promise he had made to her in the past when she had saved his life on the battlefield, to give her anything she wanted, she compelled the king to relinquish the kingdom to Bharata instead of Śrī Rāma. Daśaratha, the controller of the ten

sense organs, had not conquered his attachment to Kaikeyī; in truth, he who had overpowered both heavenly denizens and netherworld demons had failed to master his attachment to his wife, for all the while he loved her as but an extension of himself. Now paralysed with distress, hurt and horror, King Daśaratha, whose legendary forefathers were renowned for always being true to their word at any cost, had no option but to finally yield to the queen's demands. Bharata would, therefore, be installed as regent and Śrī Rāma be banished to the forest for 14 years.

It is important to be extremely cautious of the company one keeps. One must be careful of gossip-mongers and those who tend to unsettle one's faith. One should always try to surround oneself with more mature personalities as well as the satsaṅga of saints and sages – that way, one benefits from the experience of others and, on a spiritual level, is ultimately protected. At all times and relentlessly, one must be alert to Mantharā-like thoughts; be vigilant towards one's weaknesses and refuse to come under their influence. A weakness makes you feel insecure, and when you are insecure, you fear others; fear leads to jealousy and jealousy impels you to behave like Kaikeyī. Try to remove your failings. If you have no flaws, you cannot be manipulated.

The Golden Deer – The Fall

Lord Rāma was exiled. Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa followed Him. In spite of being denied the pleasures and comforts of the palace, in spite of the severities of the forest, Sītā was with Her Rāma and remained content and happy. In other words, as long as the mind is turned towards the Lord, there is peace and happiness. But the moment it turns away from Him, that instant when the mind's eye is attracted by the metaphorical golden deer, it risks a fall. Therefore, be careful. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa cautions –

When a man thinks of objects, attachment for them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire arises anger.[1]

From anger comes delusion, from delusion loss of memory; from loss of memory, the sense of discrimination is destroyed and with that he perishes.[2]

These verses are beautifully and elaborately dramatised in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The golden deer is a perfect symbol of sensory objects. It gleams, it charms, it tugs at us, yet it hops from here to there, consequently either eluding us or dragging us along with it. Similarly, from a distance sensory objects appear shiny and attractive, yet they are fickle, temporary, constantly changing and fleeting. They may provide momentary pleasure, but eventually they become a cause for sorrow. The instant one shifts one's attention from the Lord and from one's spiritual goal, one falls to the fate of Mother Sītā.

It is true, of course, that sensory objects do give some pleasure. When I was a youngster, one day my friends and I were sitting with Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda. He was not very well that day and suffered from a bad cold, so our hostess offered him a cup of piping hot, aromatic coffee. Gurudev sipped the coffee, licked his lips and exclaimed, "Ah, whoever said there is no happiness in sensory pleasures?" Strangely enough, a little earlier in the day

during our youths' Study Group meeting, we had been discussing among ourselves, quite convincingly, how there was no happiness at all to be found in sensory objects. We were zealous aspirants, after all. And so we were stunned by Gurudev's declaration, because of both its timing and its seemingly contradictory nature. But no one uttered a word in response. Gurudev finished his coffee and, as he walked out of the room, he stopped, turned around, and again intoned, "Whoever said there is no happiness in sensory objects?" Then, with a wink he added, "However, it is only temporary… How long does it really last?"

The things which give us what we call 'happiness' – whether such happiness manifests on the material level, as pleasure, or on the emotional level, as joy – ultimately become the cause of sorrow. One day they lift us to thrilling heights; the next day they dash our hopes and expectations. Because those things belong to the web of saṁsāra, the 'universe of names and forms'. They change; they run out; they tease; they elude us. By and in themselves, they are never enough. And even when we have 'everything', the so-called good life still doesn't quite satisfy us completely. Anyone who has tried quenching his or her thirst with clear water and a fizzy soft drink alternately, will appreciate the subtle difference purported here. In our heart of hearts, we know that things, beings, feelings and concepts, all these ultimately give way to sorrow and anguish. Nothing can make us happy beyond time, space and comparison; nothing can fill the vacuum of our primal ignorance; nothing works as the definitive antidote for our existential angst – nothing except Self-realisation. Yet, instead of cultivating a culture that sees this as a serious goal overriding material 'success', we are often so titillated, our entire lifestyle, and increasingly the ways of the modern world, are geared toward the relentless chase of impermanents.

Sītā saw the golden deer, and Her mind started toying with it. She imagined how, if the deer were captured alive, She would keep it as a pet; if dead, ah well, it would make a beautiful throw on Her couch back at the palace. Sītā persuaded Śrī Rāma to give chase and

capture the enchanting animal. It must be emphasised at this point that objects per se do not create temptation. Nor do they literally contain a specific measure of joy or sorrow, for, if that were true, they would give either result to everyone equally. It is our relationship with the objects that yields happiness (albeit temporary) or sorrow. You may be sitting in absolute peace and contentment, but when your mind starts dwelling on some object or the other, attachment arises and later intensifies into a lust for that object; you are stirred into restlessness and struggle to get what you want – sometimes, at any cost. When that desire remains unfulfilled, it leads to oft-uncontainable anger.

Sītā heard a cry for help and, erroneously fearing for Śrī Rāma, asked Lakṣmaṇa to go to His aid. At first, Lakṣmaṇa tried to assuage Her fears and reminded Her of Śrī Rāma's prowess as well as His instructions not to leave Her alone. Tulasīdāsa, in his devotional approach to the authorship of the *Rāmacaritamānasa*, does not elaborate on Sītā's words to Lakṣmaṇa. But in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Sage Vālmīki graphically illustrates the depths to which a person can tumble from the pinnacle of poise and piety: Sītā became angry and in the resulting delusion, She failed to appreciate Lakṣmaṇa's advice. Instead She accused him – Her younger brother-in-law, who, regarding Her as a mother figure, had never even looked squarely at Her ravishing beauty – of ulterior motives. So acerbic and unbecoming was the language attributed to Sītā that a humiliated Lakṣmaṇa gave in and set off – but only after he drew a protective circle around Her.

When the mind wanders away from the Lord, the world becomes a tinderbox for our passions. At any point in time, such a relationship can ignite anger, leading to delusion, loss of memory and a compromised ability to discern between good and harmful. This ladder of fall is a very logical and systematic breakdown of the proverb, 'An idle mind is the devil's workshop'. The episode involving the golden deer demonstrates how Mother Sītā, till then the epitome of serenity and dignity, fell to the lure of a mere object and ended

up accusing the saintly Lakṣmaṇa of lust. Lakṣmaṇa represents brahmacarya – commonly translated as ‘celibacy’, but more significantly implying ‘self-mastery’ – and the protective circle he drew around Sītā was invested with this power. In short, while we may have desires, if we possess self-control and remain within the boundaries of dharma, we will not suffer. Cross those limits, however, and we fall prey to sure sorrow.

---

[1] ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते।
सङ्गात्सञ्जायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते॥ - भगवद्-गीता-२.६२

[2] क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः।
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति॥ - भगवद्-गीता-२.६३

Rāvaṇa – The Mega Delusion

As soon as Lakṣmaṇa left, Rāvaṇa arrived on the scene. The name 'Rāvaṇa' means 'one who makes everyone cry'. Rāvaṇa is also known as Daśamukha, 'of ten heads', hinting at those who are extroverted and like to indulge their ten sense organs. Although Rāvaṇa was a highly educated man of stellar achievements, he was essentially selfish and always hankered for sensory gratification. Thus this ten-headed demon represents our individuated ego, our primal delusion, which always wants everything for itself.

Rāvaṇa appeared in front of Sītā's hut, masquerading as a devout sannyāsī (monk). All our desires and temptations announce themselves in a certain disguise. For instance, people will insist that a little wine is beneficial for your heart and health. But then we also know alcohol harms your brain cells! It is not wine but red grape juice that is good for you overall!

Threatening sin and calamity upon Her, Rāvaṇa took advantage of Sītā's good nature and basically coerced Her into crossing the protective boundary to hand him some bhikṣā (alms). Sītā was flustered, became superstitious, stepped over the protective line and, alas, found herself in the clutches of the ten-headed demon. This scene, another high point of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is especially instructive for spiritual aspirants who have not been on the path very long: If we remain within the boundaries of brahmacarya, if we live in moderation and righteousness, we are protected, but the moment we ignore those guidelines, we can no longer stay in Bhārata, the realm of wisdom, light and divinity. Thus Sītā was kidnapped and hauled away deep into the glittering land of Laṅkā, the world of sheer materialism.

As his chariot was flying through the skies, jetting back to his kingdom with the visibly distressed Sītā by his side, Rāvaṇa was confronted by Jaṭāyu, the elderly king of the vultures, who knew of

the glories of Śrī Rāma. Jaṭāyu fought long and hard with Rāvaṇa in a bid to save Mother Sītā, and eventually gave up his life in the process. In a parallel vein, each and everyone of us has a duty to stop wrongdoing wherever we see it and not allow it to propagate, even if we have to die for it. Is it not said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing"? Jaṭāyu's effort, though fatal, was a unique and universal example of heroism, transcending age, jurisdiction, even species barriers. His response was also a sterling demonstration of what it means to stay true to humanity's highest ideals as personified by the Puruśottama Maryādā (Way of Man), Śrī Rāma.

In the hub of Laṅkā, Rāvaṇa tried to entice Sītā with various offers and deals. He proposed to make Her the chief queen, with the other queens to serve as Her handmaidens. But Sītā had already realised Her mistake the moment She was taken hostage, and so She resolutely refused the pleasures of Laṅkā. Rāvaṇa then tried to intimidate Her with his powers and demonic attendants, but to no avail – delusion cannot influence one who has no desire for sensory enjoyments, or one who has firm faith in the love of God. Ultimately, the glory of man lies not just in his ability to rise to great heights, but more so in being able to rise, and rise assuredly, after a devastating fall. Sītā fixed Her mental gaze on Her last sight of Śrī Rāma, of Him running after the deer for Her sake, and started reflecting on how Her one whimsical desire had led to this major disaster. She then resolved to abide in remembrance of the Lord, and thus insured Her full and final rescue, never again to shudder at Rāvaṇa's threats and taunts.

Pining for the Lord

All of us are in the same predicament as Sītā. Even after understanding Vedānta, after gaining this knowledge by attending numerous discourses or reading various books, and after experiencing peace at satsaṅgas, we still fall, so easily, into the clutches of the ego. We need to do what Sītā did. With firm, unwavering singlemindedness, She meditated on Śrī Rāma and rejected all negative movements of the ego. Thus She remained in Laṅkā in Aśoka Vāṭikā. Śoka means 'sorrow' and a-śoka is 'where there is no sorrow'. In spite of being a prisoner, despite the harsh treatment She received, She did not live in a torpor, depressed and dejected. Her intense remembrance of Her Lord, combined with Her faith that the Lord would one day reach Her, formed a virtual cocoon around Her. At first She wondered why such a fate had befallen Her, but after some introspection, She saw the mistake in not trusting Lakṣmaṇa, admitting –

Lakṣmaṇa, it was not your fault.[1]

Our sorrows in life are not caused by others, but by ourselves. Sītā recognised this, and rather than wallowing in self-pity, rather than condemning the world and finding someone to blame, She proactively resolved to stay under the Aśoka tree and seek refuge in Her all-compassionate Lord. It is important to note that while Sītā was pining for the Lord, the Lord was pining for Her as well. Indeed, as a devotee yearns for the Lord, the Lord yearns much more for His devotee. He is always sending us messages; He is always calling out to us, but we are unable to hear Him; we are too busy chasing the mirage of the golden deer.

---

[1] हा लछिमन तुम्हार नहिं दोसा - रामचरितमानस-३.२८.२

Śrī Hanumāna – The Guru

Lord Rāma went in search of Sītā, but had only the forest monkeys to assist Him. Our thoughts, wild, untamed, jumping from one subject to another, are just like monkeys – uncontrollable. The monkeys were scattered under Bāli, but under King Sugrīva (the name means 'well-reined'), and with the potency of Śrī Hanumāna, who represents among other things brahmacarya or self-mastery, they became a well-organised, formidable army.

Often we listen to discourses, get inspired, and embark on our spiritual journey with great enthusiasm, but then we find it difficult to sustain our efforts. Only one who has utter faith, dedication and self-control can have the stamina to cross 800 miles of ocean water, as Lord Hanumāna did. The number eight hundred is significant, because eight is the number of māyā. Literally translated as 'illusion', and referring to the world at large, māyā comprises the eightfold prakṛti (lesser nature of the Lord), made up of the five elements plus the mind, intellect and ego. A true and committed devotee can easily overcome māyā.

Śrī Hanumāna crossed the ocean, found Mother Sītā and burnt Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā. He presented Sītā the Lord's ring and reassured Her that Śrī Rāma was on His way. When the Sītā-like devotee calls out to the Lord, repeatedly and sincerely, wanting nothing but Him, God sends His messenger, the Guru – just as Lord Rāma sent Hanumāna as a forerunner. The Guru traverses 800 miles to reach us, but many a time we are unwilling to take even eight steps. We are not prepared to drive eight minutes, or eight miles, towards the Guru. Still, the arrival of the Guru in our life is a comforting sign that the Lord remembers us, that He is not far, and He is definitely coming.

The Final Battle – Destruction of the Ego

The moment Śrī Rāma received the news that Sītā was devotedly anticipating His arrival, He rallied an army of monkeys and, with their help, built a bridge to cross the ocean dividing Bhārata and Laṅkā. Tulasīdāsa mentions that the construction of the bridge was a difficult and complicated task, but the greatness of the name of the Lord is such that it effortlessly transports the faithful devotee across the ocean of transmigration. He says –

The name of the Lord dries up the ocean of saṁsāra.[1]

If you hold steadfast to the name of the Lord, there will be no ocean left for you to cross or build a bridge over. While Lord Rāma had to engage in battle with Rāvaṇa, in truth His name itself is so efficacious, the moment you embrace it, the veil of māyā starts unravelling. That is because the Lord, being the Absolute, is necessarily present as much in His name as in His form. In other words, His name is non-different from Him, just as waves are essentially the ocean. And as that name is available to multiple devotees simultaneously, working through their lives and uplifting them, it is celebrated as an even more powerful manifestation of the Lord than the Lord Himself – so to speak. Once we focus on the holy name, the scattered monkey-thoughts reorganise themselves and become such a forceful army that even the mighty Rāvaṇa cannot reckon with it. In the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa* author Vālmīki, he did not even know of Rāma prior to the transformation that took root in his heart upon his recitation of the Lord's holy name. But for those of us who have heard the story and understood its inner meaning, the act of japa (recitation of the Lord's holy name) is all the more behoving, to surrender not just to the sound-vibration of the name, but to everything that name represents. Thus we bring mananam (reflection) to align with our japa, thereby reinforcing our bhakti (devotion) towards the Lord. And that, we can be sure, is the beginning of the end of the Rāvaṇa within us.

The battle started and one by one, the monkeys killed all the mighty demons – Kumbhakaraṇa, Indrajita and the others. The war between Lord Rāma and Rāvaṇa lasted for nine days; these are the nine days of Navarātri before the Dussehra festival. The first three days are dedicated to invoking the blessings of Goddess Śakti or Durgā, so that all negative tendencies and attachments are definitively destroyed. The next three are devoted to Devī Lakṣmī to inculcate in us an abundance of virtues. Subsequently, with a pure and concentrated mind, one offers the last three days to Mother Sarasvatī for her blessings of knowledge for the final battle with the ego, born of inscrutable ignorance.

At the beginning of the combat, Śrī Rāma cut off Rāvaṇa's heads one by one, but this did not work, as each time a new head popped up, replacing the old one and only fuelling Rāvaṇa's rage. Sage Agastya arrived and advised Śrī Rāma to 'invoke the Sun-god, the Lord of the universe and the God of all gods, with undivided attention' – that is, to invoke wisdom and pierce through all the ten heads with the arrow of Knowledge. As ordained by Nārāyaṇa (Godhead) and by virtue of a boon, Rāvaṇa possessed the nectar of immortality, which was stored under his navel. This is the ego of unending vāsanās, born of a primal ignorance which hurls us from one life to another. Finally, Lord Rāma used the most powerful weapon in His arsenal, the Brahmāstra, consecrating it with various mantras before firing it at Rāvaṇa. The demon fell and the *Rāmāyaṇa* – a cosmic play of the Divine – reached its true culmination while also making a critical turn, back towards Ayodhya and Rāma-rājya.

If you try to control your senses separately, one by one, more often than not, the moment you master one, another sense rears its ugly head and your urges or attachments become only stronger. One has to aim at the root, the unmanifest or unconscious mind, and strike with Rāma-bāṇa – the name-weapon of the Lord – in order to obliterate once and for all the entire repository of vāsanās. This destruction of the ego marks the reunion of Sītā with Lord Rāma.

[1] नाम भवसिन्धु सुखायि

A Master's 'Mind'

In the ultimate stage of Self-realisation, the mind sheds its individuality; it no longer exists. Thus Sītā entered the fire, as the mind dissolves in the ultimate Knowledge. This is one part of the *Rāmāyaṇa* that is, regrettably, often misunderstood, as people do not grasp its great spiritual significance. When the ego is dead, when primal ignorance is destroyed, there can remain no mind. However, a true spiritual Master, one who has realised the Self, Supreme, continues to live in the world using his mind to serve creation. But this is not a torturous, egocentric mind like ours; it is an apparent mind that is used by the Master in engaging with the world, a temporary identification with the Lord's lesser nature taken up with full knowledge of the Absolute Reality. The Self-realised Master is thus a king, representing the acme of human evolution, guiding humanity and ruling the world as Ātmā-Rāma.

‘Rā’ and ‘Mā’

It has been observed that when Masters serve the world, sometimes people do not understand, and simply criticise them, creating impediments to their work. Some years ago, Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda expressed a desire to build a modern international school for overseas children to study in India, so that they could imbibe Indian culture and values. A large tract of land and, naturally, substantial funds were required. There were a number of pledges made to Gurudev, but unfortunately none of them came through. Finally, one morning Gurudev woke up and declared that he would not build the school in Himachal Pradesh (a state in Northern India). He was doing it for the country, but the people did not seem to want it. It was the Lord’s work and if the Lord was not providing the land, he was not going to question that decision. It fell to Gurudev’s successor, Pūjya Swami Tejomayananda, to fulfil that particular vision of setting up the Chinmaya International Residential School, now a leading east-west institute in India.

When there is disapproval, a Master goes into meditation. The people of Ayodhya questioned Śrī Rāma’s actions and censured Mother Sītā, and so Lord Rāma, as a king par excellence, sacrificed his personal happiness in the interest of ensuring social stability, and deemed it best that Sītā be sent to Vālmīki’s āśrama, where She would be appreciated and held in esteem by saints and sages who valued the esoteric knowledge of the supreme Reality. Fittingly, in such a divine atmosphere Rāma and Sītā’s children Luva and Kuśa were born.

Sītā represents the mind or individuated soul. How does She crop up in the field of supreme Consciousness? Where in the plains of the Infinite does the so-called ‘finite’ arise? And where does it disappear into? No one can tell. Yet, for as long as the mind exists, saṁsāra also seems to exist. Sītā eventually returned to the lap of Mother

Earth, from where She had come – a metaphor for the individuated soul merging back into its own true nature, Infinite Consciousness. The twin boys Luva and Kuśa, thereafter, returned to Ayodhya to spread dharma. Similarly, after a Master's manifestation in the material world is withdrawn, disciples or other people appear and carry on with his message and work.

Luva and Kuśa are Rā and Mā. The eminent sage-poet Vālmīki informs us that the original *Rāmāyaṇa*, narrated by Lord Śiva, consisted of nearly a billion verses. The devatās (heavenly denizens), the dānavas (earthly denizens) and manuṣayas (people of the lower world) had all approached the Creator, Lord Brahmā, asking Him to reveal to them the greatest secret of the universe. Brahmā advised them to place their query before Lord Śiva. In response, the Lord of Kailash divided the verses of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and bestowed each group of suppliants with 330 million verses each. Upon the petitioners' request, however, the remaining 10 million verses were also divided and distributed three ways, leaving 330,000 verses intact. After yet another round of division and distribution, only one verse with 32 letters was left.

Ultimately, only two letters remained, and Lord Śiva flatly refused to part with them; these were the letters Rā and Mā. This literary anecdote scintillates in its message to the modern sceptic: If, even after studying the entire *Rāmāyaṇa*, you have not developed love for the Lord, then simply bring these two syllables to your lips, in whichever order you like. Keep repeating them, again and again. As you breathe in and out, savour the sounds. Let them seep into your mind and establish a momentum, even as you go about your daily chores. Then watch what happens.

To those who are already devotees, the mentioned anecdote is a reminder to embrace the name Rāma, to recite it, feel it, love it; bear witness to the *Rāmāyaṇa* playing out in your heart. Live this *Inner Rāmāyaṇa* and rule your universe as Ātmā-Rāma. This is the real *Rāmāyaṇa*. Experience it and realise it here and now.

Footnote Transliteration

1. *yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata,*
abhyutthānam-adharmasya tadātmanaṁ sṛjāmyaham. – Bhagavad-gītā–4.7

2. *paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām,*
dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge. – Bhagavad-gītā–4.8

1. *rāma bhagata hita nara tanu dhārī, sahi saṅkaṭa kiye sādhu sukhārī.*

– Rāmacaritamānasa-1.23.1

2. *hari byāpaka sarbatra samānā, prema teṁ pragaṭa hohiṁ maiṁ jānā.*

– Rāmacaritamānasa-1.184.3

1. *rāma ek tāpasa tiya tārī, nāma koṭi khala kumati sudhārī.*

- Rāmacaritamānasa-1.23.2

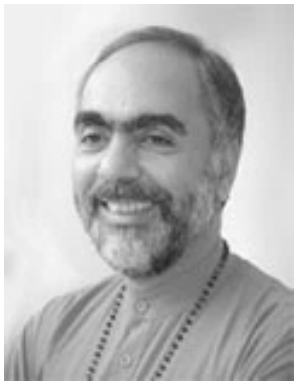
1. *dhyāyato viṣayānpuṁsaḥ saṅgasteṣūpajāyate,*
saṅgātsanjāyate kāmaḥ kāmātkrodho'bhijāyate – Bhagavad-gītā–2.62

2. *krodhātbhavati sammohaḥ sammohātsmṛtivibhramaḥ,*
smṛtibhraṁśād buddhināśo buddhināśātpraṇaśyati – Bhagavad-gītā–2.63

1. *ha lachimana tumhāra nahiṁ dosā – Rāmacaritamānasa*-3.28.2

1. *nāma bhavasindhu sukhāyi*

About the Author



In an era rife with scepticism and confusion about matters spiritual, Swami Swaroopananda is a rare voice that blends authenticity with accessibility; theory with self-practice; logic with heart.

As a child he heard from his grandmother many religious stories based on the great Indian epics and the history of saints. These stories suddenly came to life, acquiring new meaning and depth, when as an adolescent he encountered the pre-eminent Master of Vedānta, Swami Chinmayananda.

His heart completely moved and inspired, in 1984 Swami Swaroopananda gave up his family's thriving business to undergo intensive training under Swami Chinmayananda and Swami Tejomayananda at Sandeepany, Mumbai. He was initiated into the monastic order in 1992. Since then, he has touched thousands of lives across the world, and his tremendous work in bringing out the essential wisdom and underlying unity of all religions has garnered him a place among the vanguards of self-development philosophy.

Swami Swaroopananda has now been bestowed by Swami Tejomayananda the privilege to serve as the Head of Chinmaya Mission worldwide (www.chinmayamission.com).

Other books by Swami Swaroopananda

Ik Oṅkār: Meditations on the One Indivisible Truth
Avatar: The Divine Manifestation
Simplicity and Meditation
Destiny – Who's In Charge?
Journey into Health
Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra: The Mantra of Life over Death
Managing the Manager
Mind – Can It Be Tamed?
Valley of Bliss
Sankat Mochan: An Insight into Problems and Their Solutions
The Science Behind the Game of Life

Audio CDs

- Gayatri Mantra
- Sankat Mochan
- Ik Onkaar
- Bhakti Rasa
- Love Is
- Beauty of Love
- Bhaja Govindam
- Mind Matters
- Secret of Success - Hanumāna Chalisa
- Win the Mind, Win the World

Potential to Performance series (available as a set and individually)

Appreciating What You Have, Building Confidence, Bursting with Dynamism, Concentration, Confronting Failure, Dare to Make a Difference, Discovering Your Purpose, Forgive and Be Free, and Know Yourself

Life Management Techniques series (available as a set and individually)

The Science of Life Management, Managing the Mind, Managing Love & Relationships, Managing Stress, Managing Wealth

Seven Days, Seven Powers series (available as a set and individually)

Ganesha (Leadership), Devi (Nature), Śiva (Freedom), Vishnu (Self-Actualisation), Rama (Ethics), Hanumāna (Dedication), Kṛṣṇa (God)

DVDs

He Did It! And So Can You: 108 Names, 108 Ways to Perfection
MahaBharataa (set of 10)
Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra (set of 2 plus book)

Self-development Online Course
Make It Happen™: http://chinfo.org/index.php/make-it-happen

For more information visit http://eshop.chinmayamission.com/

For millennia, populations across South and Southeast Asia have looked to the Rāmāyaṇa for role models of all kinds: the dutiful child, the exemplary spouse, the steadfast sibling, the doting parent, the quintessential friend, the devoted servitor, the upright and selfless ruler... all the roles that go toward making up an ideal society, even as life throws up constant challenges and surprises. But the staying power of the ancient epic owes not only to its author's literary genius, but more so, to its intimation of the divine potential of the human spirit.

Swami Swaroopananda uses the lens of Vedānta to highlight this underlying essence and its significance for spiritual aspirants, in this eye-opening mini treatise. Accessible and concise at the same time, *The Inner Rāmāyaṇa* takes the lessons of the epic from the simple to the sublime.

CHINMAYA
PRAKASHAN
BRINGING KNOWLEDGE TO LIGHT
The Publications Division of
Central Chinmaya Mission Trust

ISBN 9788175975118
I0010